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A PROPOSAL

For a better mode of victualling the navy in warm climates, applicable also to East India ſhips, and containing many hints for curing provisions in Europe, by captain Forreſt of the navy *:

WHEN I conſider the uncomfortable manner in which ſeamen on board men of war often live in India, where I have reſided many years, and have made above twenty country voyages, compared with the manner in which the ſame expence the nation is at to maintain them might enable them to live, I hope the following remarks will be attended to.

I chiefly condemn the improper mode of preſerving beef and pork, not only in East India, but in Europe, and what immediately follows that improper mode, and ſeems inſeparable from it, and linked to it, the improper mode of dreſsing the ſame, ſimply boiling, how widely different from the manner in which the country black ſailors, called laſcars, live in India, many of whom are daily ſeen in the ſtreets of London.

* This important paper was communicated to the Editor, by a gentleman who is ever attentive to promote the welfare of his country.

In my first voyages in country ſhips, I always made a remark, the European ſailors (generally one to five laſcars, and who go under the name of quarter-maſters,) are victualled as ſailors are in Europe, that is, they have ſalt beef and pork, and rice inſtead of bread, ſometimes Bengal biſcuit; but good cargo rice, as it is called, and of which the laſcars are allowed about two pounds *per* day, is never refuſed them, and it is ſerved to them hot, twice a-day, at eight in the morning and five in the evening.

The remark that I never failed to make was, that theſe Europeans, with a kind of diſcontent, took notice that the blacks lived better than they; but the laſcars did not coſt in victualling above one half of what was laid out to victual the Europeans, when European ſalt meats were purchaſed.

The laſcars allowance was plain rice, doll, a kind of vetch, two pounds of gee (butter) *per* month, and one rupee fiſh money; with which (and no doubt part of their own eight rupees *per* month pay, of which, on voyages, they have two, three, or four months advance, according to its expected length) they lay in a ſtock of articles, which an European would hardly think of, and many of which they would deſpiſe, not knowing their value.

The Europeans had beef and pork full allowance; in this there was a ſameneſs. It could not be dreſsed but in one way, as already obſerved, (boiling,) and I am perſuaded, their exercise being but ſmall, it was unhealthy food, and not fit for a hot country, more eſpecially if the crew is ſickly.

Latterly I altered my mode of victualling the Europeans. The beef and pork I carried to ſea with me,

were salted, free of bone, and cut in small slices, with a mixture of some coarse sugar, this kept much better than in the usual way, and took up much less room. I made the following use of it: I caused it to be freshened with salt water let in upon it, in a tub never larger than the half of a hogshead, or gang cask, and often much smaller, which was perforated by many holes at the bottom; this being done for six or eight hours, I gave it, after draining, a rince with a small quantity of fresh water, perhaps half a pint of water to a pint of meat; as I must now talk of meat not by the piece or weight, but by measure. Being thus rinced, the fresh water, now become salt, was let run off; then a certain quantity of India butter called *gee*, (good oil would do as well) was put into the copper or iron pot, and just let come to boil, which it presently does. Then the drained meat was thrown upon the boiling gee, which being stirred a few minutes, the roots and vegetables, whatever kind was on board, were thrown in with a very little fresh water, and the whole so stopt by a well fitting cover, that the contents were rather digested, as cooks say, than stewed, consequently sooner done; by this means saving fuel. The lascars would never touch any thing but what their own cook (*banderey*) dressed, and they sometimes mixed fish and flesh, making a savoury dish, of which the Europeans had no objection to partake; the vegetables were yams or potatoes; either the European or the sweet, called the Spanish onions, raw or preserved in vinegar, made of toddy drawn from the cocoa nut tree; cabbage sprouts dried in the sun, and so preserved; pumkins, which keep long being hung in the air;

mangoes, cut green from the stone and dried in the sun, (plumbs and apples would correspond;) a little tamarind, and that great antiscorbutic, salted limes, lemons or oranges; of which (the lime particularly) the lascars carry always a stock to sea; a few ounces of cayan pepper, (capsicum would correspond;) and last of all, an emulsion, made by pouring hot water over a ripe cocoa nut rasped down; this emulsion, though grateful to the taste, is bad for the stomach raw, but when boiled, a little is exceeding well flavoured, and antiscorbutic; the rasped cocoa nut, well squeezed, is generally thrown to the fowls. A stew made in the above manner, varying the ingredients, was served twice a-day, and was exceeding good, never too salt; for I apprehend, the roots and vegetables, in digesting, farther extracted the salt from the meat, and the whole expence for the Europeans, was much less than when I bought European provisions, and they were better pleased. The stew was served with a ladle, and ate with rice, calling it curry.

A sailor on board of a man of war has on meat days, a piece of salt beef or pork, boiled for dinner; possibly it is all ate up at one meal; if any remains for next day's breakfast, how uncomfortable is the cold scrap! Breakfast in all countries, but especially in hot countries, ought to be a very comfortable meal. For the many years I have sailed in India, I never let any body go on duty, if there was the least chance of their being from the ship after eight o'clock, but they breakfasted first; and the cooks were often up by day-light to dress a hot breakfast for such as went early on shore: If exposed to the

sun for any time without breakfast, they returned on board often sick at the stomach; but otherwise would bear being in the sun a whole day, without complaint; they sometimes carried pots in the boat with them, and cooked aſhore.

I have supposed this mode of victualling for warm countries, but I see no reason why it may not be adopted at home in a great measure.

I have said the meat, cut from the bone in small pieces, was preserved with some sugar mixed with salt; but as in freſhening it the sugar was carried off with the salt, I be-grudged losing what was very wholesome,—I soon changed my method.

Long before I went to India, which was in 1751, the Portugueze used to preserve fiſh, cut in small pieces, with salt and sugared tamarind; and I frequently carried to sea with me (cured by the Portugueze of Calcutta, who make a trade of it) a tolerable provision for my own table; they called it *pesche molia*. I never found the fiſh thus preserved a bit too salt. It required only to be fried in the tamarind, *&c.* which covered it, adding a little butter.

But sugar and tamarinds are very cheap in Bengal, and latterly, I took the hint, and preserved meat with one part salt, the other sugared tamarind, throwing away the stones and strings of the tamarind, and adding a small proportion of cayan; and never was obliged to freſhen the slices of meat, when a good deal of vegetable was stewed with it. If this is tried at home, let not the difficulty of getting tamarind be an objection, sugar and salt will do; and I apprehend more than half of the former, at

least, it is worth trial. The more sugar is used the leſs is the need of freſhening. Here I cannot help remarking, how easily, even without culture, tamarind, cocoa nuts, limes and oranges, cayan pepper, *&c.* would grow in the Bahama islands. The cocoa nut tree delights in a sandy soil near the sea. The nut must be gathered ripe, and by all means kept in the huſk; a great manufacture of oil might be made from them by boiling the bruised nut, to supply the West India islands; and vinegar may be made of its toddy. As the nut, when ripe, will keep many months, I see no reason why they might not be used at home, if what I am going to say is put in practice.

Let the beef killed for the navy be cut in small slices from the bone, and preserved with one half salt, and one half sugar. Let the hogs be ſkinned, and preserved in the same manner, cutting out, in both beef and pork, the inside parts of the sirloins, which ought to be preserved or cured by itself. The ſkin of the hogs will make stout leather, the bones may certainly be put to some use, the juices of which, when barrelled up, not coming into contact with the salt, incline the whole to putrifaction; and their room saved in stowage is about one fourth part.

I ſhall suppose there is an iron pot for one hundred men, in which I propose to dreſs them two meals a-day, the first to be ready at eight or nine o'clock in the morning, the second as ſhall be found convenient, and both to be dreſsed in the following manner:

For one meal for 100 men, let fifty ounces of butter or oil, be put into the heated iron pot, this will immediately boil; to this add 200 ounces of pork, and 300 ounces of beef, the pork first, (this makes ten

ounces *per* day of meat for each man, and one ounce of butter, divided into two meals) which pork must be stirred about for a few seconds before the beef is thrown in. Whatever may be spared of the pickle is to be thrown in also. Let this stew for a ſhort time: Then having stirred it well, put in the sour crout, roots and vegetables, and close it well up to digest. It will be soon ready; and if, just before it is ready, there be added a quarter or one-eighth of a cocoa nut for each man, or twenty cocoa nuts for one hundred men, rasped down, and an emulsion made from it, and to the whole add a handful of dried capsicums, a sort of cayan, very common in England, the meſs to be served out with a laddle, will be both savoury and wholesome. I need not say if flour be added, so much the better, or raisins, prunes, or figs, but especially salted limes, lemons or oranges, and some of the vinegar thrown in, that has preserved onions or whatever else.

I do not apprehend, when there is a good stock of sour crout, roots, &c. that the curry will be too salt. If it is, in curing diminiſh the salt, and increase the sugar, perhaps add vinegar; I am persuaded pork, having much fat, wants but little salt. My having always, *i. e.* within these eight years, used half salt, half sugared tamarind, which answered very well, makes me uncertain of the effect of half salt and half sugar precisely.

The Malays often put into the wet ground, tied up in a cloth, a kind of bean, until it vegetates. This they put into their curries. Why they on ſhore ſhould do so I cannot tell; but taking the idea from them,

I have done much the same at sea, with a kind of pea, called doll, or gram, in India. I steeped the pease in water until they swelled, and then put them into a box, upon a layer of earth, then another layer of earth, and another of pease; in a few, days according as the weather was moist or dry, they were sprouted, and fit to be curried, or stewed, the same mode was repeated and succeeded.

I am confident a cask may be filled in this manner with alternate layers of pease, with beans, or any other proper seed, and mould; and in three or four days give a large quantity of wholesome vegetable, highly antiscorbutic. The same operation may be repeated with the same casks, and same earth, to great advantage; the casks headed. up, may be put away for the time. Posibly a vegetable, so much in infancy, if I may so speak, stewed with such meat, may farther extract its salt.

Care should be taken to provide our seamen in India with good cargo rice; and to let it be well cleaned before it is boiled, there is no want of hands to do what is so necesary: This is much neglected.

Our fleet was so sickly when admiral Hughes last met Suffrein, that eleven hundred men were sent sick on shore at Madras: Monsieur Suffrein, when at Atcheen, in 1782, got not many bullocks, but plenty of vegetables. The French deal more in stews than we do, which suit better for warm countries.

The beef and pork salted in Bengal soon grew rancid.

Millions of cocoa nuts in East India are carried from the Nicobar, and Carnicobar islands to Pegu,

and whole cargoes sold for ten or twelve rupees *per* hundred; as are cargoes of ſhrimps, beat up into a paſte and dried in the ſun, often carried in boats, in bulk, up to Ava the capital. They call it blatehang or barlychang.

The Pegu cocoa nuts are inferior to those that grow near the ſea, therefore they are fond of those from the islands lying off the coaſt.

The men ſhould have a pint of tea. Tea on ſhore to working people, may not be ſo good as malt liquor, but at ſea, where there is no labour that can be called hard, at leaſt in the navy or East Indiamen, tea as a cooler or diluter is wholeſome. Four ounces of tea, value eightpence, and eight ounces of ſugar, value twopence, will make ſixteen pints of tea for ſixteen men, which is not three farthings *per* man. Surely this ſerved twice a-day is no great matter. To make tea for one hundred men, fourteen or fifteen gallons, allowing for waſte, ſhould be put in the oppoſite pot to the digeſting pot; they ſhould have it dreſſed for them, elſe they will neglect it; at the ſame time, as many, at their pleaſure or command, as may wiſh to have tea, ſhould be allowed ſomehow to have a little by purchaſe, againſt their wages or otherwiſe. I have always obſerved, ſailors drinking tea weans them from the thought of drinking ſtrong liquors; and with tea they are eaſily contented; not ſo with whatever will intoxicate, be it what it will. This has always been my remark; therefore I always encouraged tea-drinking without their knowing why. Coffee has the ſame good effect; alſo

cocoa, or chocolate; but I prefer the tea as a refreſher.

Sugared tamarind ſhould be imported duty free; but as sugared tamarind will make, with spirits, very good ſhrub, to preserve the sugar-revenue it ſhould be also mixed with salt, as then, although it is fit to cure beef or pork, or make pesche molia, it would make bad ſhrub. If not salted in the West Indies, it ſhould be mixed with salt on the Custom-house wharfs. So soot is mixed with salt, when destined for manure, by revenue officers.

The Dutch are a wise people but slow; had they tamarind at their door, they long ago, I suspect, would have exported pesche molia to the Mediterranean. Tamarind is penetrating and generally consumes the small bones. All East Indians agree that pesche molia is exceedingly grateful and piquant to the taste.

What a field for the northern fiſheries!

The limes or lemons having, by an incision on their sides, had a little bruised salt put in, in a few days are thrown to dry in the sun, being first squeezed by the hand. They are then packed up in their former pickle, and the jar or caſk filled up with vinegar. It is needleſs for me to say they might also be preserved with sugar where they grow.

The lascars carry with them also to sea salted tamarinds, free from stone and string, which they put into all their diſhes. They are also fond of the tamarind when green to put into their diſhes.

THOMAS FORREST.